

# JOHN WEEMSE OF LATHOCKER, ONE OF SCOTLAND'S EARLY HEBRAISTS

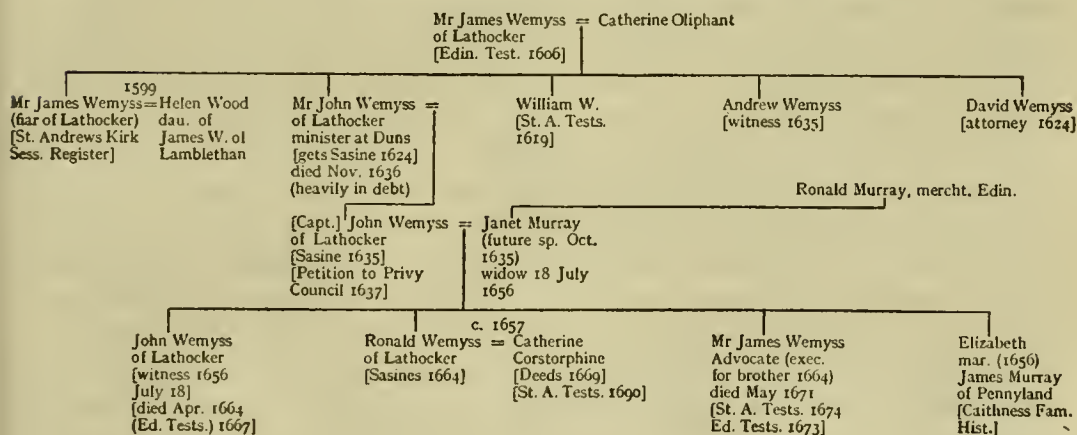
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## I

THE main facts about John Weemse's life can be told briefly.<sup>1</sup> He was born about 1579 in the East Neuk of Fife, at Lathocker, a little family estate between Largo and St. Andrews, and he was educated at St. Andrews University, where he graduated Master of Arts in 1600. He does not appear to have sought a parish immediately, but to have gone home and devoted himself to further study. It was only in 1608 that he was appointed to a charge—Hutton in Berwickshire. The appointment was made by the General Assembly, and the note about it is interesting, for it shows even thus early where both Weemse's gifts and his ecclesiastical sympathies lay. He was appointed "as one of the best-learned and disposed for peace of those on the side of the ministers, for maintaining unity among the brethren who were considered as tending to Episcopacy." This Assembly which made the appointment—Linlithgow, 1608—was

- 1 One of my fellow-members, Mr. Henry M. Paton, of H.M. Record Office, has been so kind as to supply me with the following note about Weemse's family. It will be noted that it corrects both the *Fasti* and the *D.N.B.*, and also, in smaller points, Douglas's *Baronage*.

PART OF PEDIGREE OF WEMYSS OF LATHOCKER [for rest see Douglas's *Baronage*]



much exercised, according to the *Booke of the Universall Kirk of Scotland* (p. 585) "cause of eylists, qwilk is said to aryse upon diversitie of opinionones, because these diversities of opinions results upon different judgements among the brethren, concerning the externall government and discipline of the Kirk," and the Assembly thought expedient to elect certain Commissioners—according to Row "ten brethren who stood for the old government and discipline . . . and ten who stood for the intended government by bishops"—"to convey with His Majestie's Councill . . . and to treat, reasone and consult upon all matters standing presently among the brethren anent the discipline of the Kirk" (*B.U.K.* 585). Weemse was one of the commissioners appointed on the side of the ministers, and he was present (Woodrow, *Collections*, p. 240) at the conference held in Falkland in May, 1609. Whether he took a prominent part is not apparent—he was not, Calderwood tells us (vol. ii, p. 28) one of the five set apart from each side to draw up the order of business, but he must have made some contribution, for at the Diocesan Synod of Lothian in the next year he was appointed to be one of a conference of ten.

During the next few years, however, he came to take an increasingly prominent part. In 1617 he was one of the signatories of the Protestation to be presented to the King and Parliament in Edinburgh, while in the list Calderwood gives of the 37 representatives of the ministers at the conference preliminary to the Assembly of Perth (1618) his name stands third. (*Cald.* vol. ii, pp. 317f.) In the Assembly itself his contribution was considerable. Both in conference and in open Assembly he was "one of the cheefe reasoners against the Articles." (*Cald.* vol. ii, p. 332.) As a result he was summoned, along with five other ministers, to appear before the Court of High Commission for not obeying the 5 Acts of Perth, "specialle (for not) preaching to the people the story of Christ's Nativitie, Passion and Resurrection, upon the days appointed by the said Assembly, and (not) ministering the Holie Sacrament of the Communion according to the forme prescribed." (*Cald.* vol. ii, p. 411.) He appeared on the 20th of January, 1620, and from this first meeting he was dismissed, along with the others, being summoned to appear again on the 1st of March, and warned that if he did not conform within that time he would be deposed. Before he went, Weemse alleged that "he was not singular, but that all the brethren of the shire where he was minister agreed with him in judgment and practice." The Archbishop thereupon cited them to appear too in March. When they did, the Archbishop summoned the Moderators of the three Presbyteries, Dunse, Chirnsyde and Ersletoun, along with Weemse, to a private conference. "Ye sie," he said, "what a fire is in our kirk. Ye that are grave, wise, learned men would do weill

to give good example, and yield to some things for the King's pleasure, if it were but to make your tables short and to give the elements out of your own hands." Weemse answered: "that were as evill as kneeling, for that were to doe directly against the institution; therefor we will never do (it)." (Cald., vol. ii, p. 425.) After some further argument, Spottiswood said to them: "seeing I can obtaine nothing at your hand, grant me this one thing, that ye will be quyet, and not hinder others who have promised, sworne and subscribed." To that they made, according to Calderwood, "little answer" (p. 426).

I have quoted Calderwood's account of this interview fairly fully, because it was the turning point of John Weemse's career. Up to it his chief concern had been with ecclesiastical politics. After it he ceased to take any part in them at all—or at least any part that brought him into notice—and devoted himself wholly to the study of the Scriptures and to writing about them. His first book was published in 1623, and from then until his death in 1636 he was withdrawn completely from the church conflict, and lived the life of a student and writer. And the question is why. Why did he make this change? For what reason did he break so completely with his past? What was it that made him turn away from all that he had been interested in up to now and give himself to this quite new department of activity in the Church?

The answers to these questions are altogether obscure. True, there is an answer which appears to be obvious. When we find that, 14 years after his withdrawal from the conflicts of the Scottish Church he was appointed (in 1634) by King Charles to a prebend of the Cathedral of Durham, one is tempted to think that it was simply a case of Spottiswood's rebuke—quite contrary to what one might have expected—having sunk in, and that after Weemse had obeyed the Archbishop's injunction to "be quyet" for some time, and withdrawn himself from public controversy he came, little by little and in the course of time, to alter his mind about the government of the Church by bishops. In the quiet of his manse at Dunse, where he had been translated in 1613, he came to think that right did not lie completely where he had imagined that it did till now, but that there was something to be said for the royal policy as well. And so he altered his mind—or perhaps better put, his mind altered for him—gradually, until in the end, from being the bitter opponent of Episcopacy, he came to be its supporter, and a supporter so zealous that he was given preferment under it.

That interpretation of the facts is the one which occurs to the mind first of all, and psychologically, such a change of viewpoint and such a way of coming to it is perfectly natural and possible, and has parallels, even amongst Weemse's own contemporaries. But it is doubtful if it can



be the explanation of Weemse's change. For there is a fact which opposes it, and would seem to rule it out of count.

It is that Weemse's first book, which he published in 1623, three years after his withdrawal, is dedicated to the Earl of Melrose, the President of the Court of Session, and Melrose was King James's main instrument in promoting his episcopal policy in Scotland, and is described by Calderwood as "one of the chief authors of the troubles of the Kirk." True, Melrose may have carried through James's policy reluctantly. There is evidence that, at least, he thought the King was hurrying too fast. In a note to James in 1623 reporting on the small number of communicants at Easter, he says: "time and convenience shall prevail more to reduce them to conformitie than sudden or vehement instance." (*Melrose Papers*, ii, p. 632.) But on the other hand Melrose in 1621 requested the Lords of Session to remain in Edinburgh when the Court rose, in order to go to the Old Kirk for religious service on Good Friday and Easter. And those were amongst the things which only a year before Weemse had been opposing so strongly. If Weemse altered his mind in the quiet he had after he obeyed Spottiswood's injunction, he altered it not gradually and almost in despite of himself, as this theory which I have called the obvious interpretation of the facts implies, but he altered it quickly, very quickly, surprisingly if not impossibly quickly, when he now comes, in only a couple of years, to seek the patronage of him whom only so shortly ago he had so stubbornly opposed.

Do his writings then perhaps shed light? Can we gather from the books he wrote some reason for his change? Here too we are left almost completely in the dark. In one of the Dedications prefixed—and it is worth noting that those to whom he dedicated his books were all of them Episcopalians—he says that his writings "will avoid all questions whereby disputes might arise in the Church," and that promise he keeps almost to the letter. Apart from what is probably a note on the Acts of Parliament of 1630 and 1633 dealing with stipends (*Morall Law*, ii, p. 79) the only ecclesiastical controversy of the time to which he refers is that with Rome, which Presbyterians and Episcopalians had in common. Of the controversy which divided them there is not one direct word. Indeed, a person who was reading Weemse without a knowledge of the history of the time would never suspect it was a contentious time at all.

There are, however, three passages which may throw some light on Weemse's sudden change of activity after his appearance before the Court of High Commission. The first is in the *Treatise of the Four Degenerate Sons*, p. 180. The question being discussed is: For what sins should we leave the Church? and his answer is this. There are two sorts of defects in a Church, defects in manners and defects in

doctrine. For the first, he says without qualification, a man should not leave. As to the second, the defects in doctrine, these are of three kinds, errors *praeter fundamentum*, errors *circa fundamentum* (by which he means errors in doctrine which weaken, but do not overthrow, a Church), and errors *contra fundamentum*, errors which raze the foundations completely. For the first two a man should not, he holds, leave the Church, and for the third he should leave it only if the Church be wholly and totally infected by it. Only "when once shee (the Church) is dead, and no life to be found in her, then men are to separate themselves from her. . . . The Lords soule hath no delight in those who separate themselves from the Church, and make a rent, finding but small blemish in her."

The second passage is in the *Exposition of the Morall Law* (vol. i, p. 48) where he says we are bound to quit our temporary estate for the peace of the Church, and goes on to instance Gregory Nazienzus who, "when there arose a great contention in the Councell of Constantinople about him . . . left his place willingly and saide to the rest after this manner : I beseech you by the holy Trinity, that ye would live peaceably together, and if I be any cause of the dissention, I am no more worthy than the Prophet Ionas was, cast me into the Sea, that this storme may cease, and I will most willingly suffer whatsoever ye will doe unto me (although I be innocent) for your peace sake, cast me out of my place and banish me, onely keepe unity and peace amongst yourselves."

The third passage comes from the *Observations Naturall and Morall*, where, at the end of a chapter on The Situation of the Elements (p. 23) he writes : "in the winter when there are greatest stormes the Lord maketh some Halcyon or calme dayes, that this bird may hatch her young ones : so the Lord in the greatest rage and furie of his enemies can calme the storme, that the Church of God may bring forth children to him, and reserveth some dry place for them."

On the basis of these three passages, is it too far-fetched to construct some such answer as this to the question why Weemse made the change he did ? He was, as his writings show, a fine and learned scholar. But almost immediately he was ordained, he was thrown into the centre of the church controversies of the time. The choice was possibly not his own, but the gifts he had shown in one department—scholarship—led men to suppose he would possess gifts in the other—ecclesiastical statesmanship—also, and so he was forced into the controversies. But as the years went on, he became increasingly unhappy in this role of leader in ecclesiastical politics. Probable reasons for that unhappiness we shall see in a moment. But by the time of 1618 they had grown so strong and come to bulk so large in his mind that, though he took his usual prominent part in the Perth Assembly, he was all the while casting about

for a way of withdrawing himself from his connection with Church disputes, and when Spottiswood's rebuke was addressed to him and the the Bishop requested him to "be quyet," he took that for his chance and did withdraw, so severing his connection as he had been wishing to do. The method of his withdrawal may not have been altogether what he would have preferred, for it could and would be construed as a desertion of his brethren, and even a yielding to the Bishop's threat of deposition. Yet none the less he seized it. It was an opportunity and he welcomed it, and withdrew to the life of a scholar which had from the beginning been his ideal.

If that interpretation is correct, the three passages I quoted a moment ago would suggest also Weemse's *motive* for withdrawing from public life. It was not just the impatience which the man who is a scholar often feels towards Assemblies and committees. The passages would suggest that his motive was as much as anything the peace of the Church. Perhaps Weemse had come to think that as long as he, with the associates and the associations which had through the years gathered round him and his name, continued to take a leading part on the ministers' side, there could be no hope of reconciliation, or even accommodation, between them and the Bishops. They had been opposed too long, and too deep passions and acrimonies had been aroused. But if he withdrew, and if a *new* leadership came into being, then some greater measure of at least understanding might be possible, and the way to peace laid open. And certainly there was great need for peace. The struggle had been dragging on long now, and the Church's well-being was being impaired by the constant dissensions. Weemse would never leave the Church. And he loved it too much to drive a fatal cleavage within it. But if it would help its good for him to withdraw, then, like Gregory, withdraw he would, for the sake of the same unity and peace.

It may be too that another influence had been working on his mind. He may for some time now have been growing, if we cannot say more favourable to the Episcopal form of government, at least less uncompromisingly hostile to it. True, he opposed Episcopacy at Perth, and refused to carry out the Perth Assembly's orders. But then, often when a man's opinions have altered, it is difficult for him for some time to make that alteration known. For one thing, opinions often alter only gradually, and a man may undergo an almost complete mental revolution without being himself aware how far in truth he has gone. For another, we hold most of our opinions in association with other people, and when that association is held in public, as it was with Weemse and his friends, and is a matter of public knowledge or importance, a break-away from an opinion is often postponed longer than it should be, because personal



considerations enter in, and the desire to be honest and make one's change known has to struggle for its place with things like old friendships and life-long companionships in work and thought. And there is too the well-known psychological fact that sometimes an opinion is never expressed so vehemently as just at the instant when it is about to be abandoned. So it may have been with Weemse. He at Perth may well have been Paul on the road to Damascus. And after Perth the balance that had been long gently tilting may have finally swung over. There are hints that though Weemse was always on the side of the ministers, he was never a fanatic. So it may have been that by 1620 his opinions had altered, and Spottiswood's behest came as an opportunity of making the alteration known.

If we draw these two lines together, we may even get an explanation of the Dedication of his first book to the Earl of Melrose. Weemse's views had been changing, so that by 1620 they were less hostile to Melrose's than appeared on the surface. And above all things Weemse now wished the peace of the Church. Might that peace be helped if former leading opponents were seen to be standing closer together? So he dedicates to Melrose his first-fruits, and the dedication is at once an indication and a plea. Let all now try to work together, for the peace and good of the Church,

The theory is, of course, full of ifs and perhapses. But one prefers it to what seems the only alternative, namely, that when Spottiswood threatened to depose him, Weemse took panic, and was not merely content with being a renegade, but immediately set himself to court the favour of what he would himself doubtless only a few months ago have described as "the Mammon of unrighteousness."

## II

It is now time to come to Weemse's writings themselves. A very brief account of some of them is all that can be given here.

The first published, in 1623, was *The Christian Synagogue*, which is described on the title-page as containing "the diverse Reading, the right Pointing, Translation, and Collation of Scripture with Scripture. With the Customes of the Hebrewes and Proselytes, and of all those Nations, with whom they were conversant. . . . Serving generally for a helpe to the understanding of all, that desire to know and obey the will of God in holy Write; but more especially for all young Students in Divinity, that they may more easily understand the Language of Canaan and Greeke, and make a profitable use of them in Preaching."

That title is an accurate description of the aim not only of the *Christian Synagogue*, but of all Weemse's books. All his learning—and it was wide—was devoted to the one end of the interpretation of Holy Scripture, and that not as an end in itself, but for homiletics and instruction. "All error," he holds, "proceedeth from ignorance of the Scriptures. . . . We shall never understand the truth but out of the Scriptures." (*Cer. Law*, p. 208.) "Therefore," he says to the young students for whom he intends another of his books, "ye must be skilfull and trained before ye enter into this calling, that being entred in it, ye may begin to turn the key of knowledge to open the Scripture." (*Ex. Div.*, Ep. to the Reader.) And, "there is such profundity in the Scripture that all the wits of men can never sound the depths of them. It fareth with them as it did with the widdowes Oyle, it lasted as long as the Children brought vessels; there is so much store and plentie in them, that when they have filled the wits and understandings of the best, yet there is enough to be gotten out of them by those who come after." (*Ib.*)

The contents of the *Christian Synagogue* are in the main what we would to-day call Biblical Introduction, and, as we shall see later, are devoted largely to linguistics. His next book goes on to what would be more properly called Biblical Theology and Psychology. It is *The Portraiture of the Image of God in Man. In his three estates of Creation, Restauration, Glorification. Digested into two parts. The first containing, the Image of God both in the Body and Soule of Man, and Immortality of both: with a description of the severall members of the Body, and the two principall faculties of the soule, the understanding and the Will; in which consisteth his knowledge, and liberty of his will. The second containing, the passions of man in the concupiscible and irascible part of the soule: his dominion over the creatures; also a description of his active and contemplative life; with his conjunct or married estate. Whereunto is annexed* (this is a separate book) *an explication of sundry naturall and morall Observations for the clearing of divers Scriptures.*

The book is, as we said, a manual of Biblical Theology and Psychology. Some idea of the scope of the first part may be had by setting down the chapter-heads into which it is divided: (1) of the creation in general, (2) of the creation of man, (3) of man's body, divided into (a) of the several outward members of the body, (b) of the internal members of the body; (4) of the immortality of the body, (5) of the perfection of the body, (6) of the soul of man, (7) of the immortality of the soul, (8) of the conjunction of the soul with the body, (9) of the end of man's creation, (10) of the image of God in man, (11) of the knowledge of Adam in his first creation, (12) of Adam's inbred knowledge of God, (13) of Adam's acquired knowledge of God through the creatures, (14) of Adam's revealed



knowledge of God, (15) of the knowledge which Adam had of the creatures, (16) of the will of man, (17) of the will of man in his conversion.

Some knowledge of the scope of the second, the psychological part of the book, can be had from looking at the Index under Passion. The subjects dealt with are "Passion, what is it? What seat the passions have in the soul: they are moved by the understanding: only reason subdues them: they have a threefold motion: they are only in the concupiscible or irascible parts: their number is in the diverse respects of good and evil: their division: where they are united: Christ took our passions: what passions he took: how they were ruled in him: no contraritie among his passions: what contradiction ariseth in our passions: it is a fearful thing to be given over to them: how the moralists cure the passions: the Stoics root out all passions: four ways Christ cureth the passions: how far the godly are renewed in their passions."

These two lists give some idea of the scope of the *Image of God*.

The book well illustrates Weemse's general method of treatment of Scripture subjects. It is, to set down a proposition, to establish it from Scripture, to answer, from Scripture, any objections that seem to rise against it, and then (this is usual but not invariable) to bring confirmatory proofs of it either from philosophy or general knowledge, or from the writings of the Jews or the Fathers. Of the Fathers he had a wide knowledge. There are few of them he does not quote. But he has the general Protestant attitude of his age, of caution, towards them. And the place he gives to divinity in relation to philosophy he illustrates with the comparison that "the Vine-tree of it selfe bringeth forth the most comfortable grape for our nourishment, and chearing of our hearts; but yet if we set a Mandrake by it, and then drinke of that wine, the wine will make us sleepe the better. The knowledg of Divinity is the only comfortable knowledg, but yet Philosophy as the Mandrak being set by it, may have profitable use also." (Ep. to Reader, p. 3.)

In his next three books Weemse reverts more to the type of the *Christian Synagogue*. Professor Henderson points out in his paper on the Bible in 17th Century Scotland that in that time "the standard of ethics, personal and social, was Biblical, and the Ten Commandments were regarded as the sum of human duty." (*Religious Life in XVII Century Scotland*, p. 13) It is these—the Ten Commandments—which Weemse takes up in these next books, which are: *An Exposition of the Judiciall Laws of Moses*; *An Exposition of the Ceremoniall Laws of Moses*; and *An Exposition of the Morall Law, or Ten Commandements of Almighty God*. And the purpose of them he gives in the title page of the last as "an explanation of diverse questions and positions for the

right understanding thereof" and "explication of these Scriptures which depend upon, or belong unto, every one of the Commandements."

These works enjoyed a great popularity in Weemse's own day, and were often quoted after his death. There is no time to say much about them here. The first paragraph of the *Judiciall Laws* indicates what they contain. "Salomon the Preacher, Eccles. 4. 12. saith, that 'a threefold cord is not quickly broken.' The Lord gave his people three sorts of Lawes, as three Cords to binde them, and to keepe them in obedience. The first was his Morall Law, which was properly called his Law, Deut. 6. 1. Secondly, hee gave them his Ceremoniall Lawes, which are called his Statutes and Decrees, Exod. 12. 24. And thirdly his Judgements, which were the Judiciall Lawes, Mal. 4. 4; Deut. 24. 17."

In the *Judiciall Laws* Weemse treats in 44 chapters of such subjects as The Kingly Government Best (1): What Samuel meant by Mishpat Hammelek (4): A Comparison between Solomon's Kingdom and Christ's (8): Whether Jews should be tolerated in a Christian Community (15): as well as giving a great many notices about the "customes of the Hebrewes," such as their manner of counting (29): their civil contracts (30): their marriages (33): their apparell, their husbandry and the like (44). In the other two books, *The Morall* and *The Ceremoniall Law*, Weemse's plan is to bring under each of the Commandments the institutions or customs of Scripture or of the later Jews which derive from them or are related to them, and to explain and discuss them fairly fully. For example, under the 4th Commandment he sets down in the *Ceremoniall Law* discussions of the Passover, the Pentecost, the Feast of Tabernacles, the New Moons, the Day of Expiation, the Seventh Year's Rest, and the Jubilee, while under the same Commandment in the *Morall Law* he discusses the meaning of the word Sabbath, when the Sabbath begins, the moral, judicial and ceremonial part of it, the difference between it and other feast days, its sanctification, the command to rest and not to labour in it, whether it was from the beginning or not, why it was changed to the first day of the week, and what works do not violate it. All his discussions he illustrates with a wide reading, and especially with constant cross-reference to Scripture.

Weemse wrote two other books: *Exercitations Divine, containing diverse Questions and Solutions for the right understanding of Scripture*," which I shall be referring to immediately, and *A Treatise of the Four Degenerate Sons, viz., the Atheist, the Magician, the Idolater and the Jew, wherein are handled many profitable questions concerning Atheisme, Witchcraft, Idolatry and Judaisme, and sundry places of Scripture cleared out of the original tongues.*" In this last he designates himself "Mr Joh. Weemse

of Lathocker in Scotland and Prebend of Dunelm," and dedicates it to the Bishop of London.

### III

There are many interesting separate studies which could be made from different parts of Weemse's writings. One would be to use them to elucidate and illustrate the 17th-century Scottish doctrine of Scripture. Another is to see along what lines the polemic against Rome was carried on, and what authorities Weemse used for his knowledge of Roman theory and practice. A third would be to examine his authorities in general, for he seems to have had knowledge of others—exegetes, commentators, controversialists—than Henderson mentions (*op. cit.*) as the main authorities used by other 17th-century Scottish writers on Scripture and theology. The only short separate study that can be touched on here, however, is Weemse's scholarship in Hebrew, and his learning in Rabbinic and other Jewish lore.

I approach that by way of Weemse's ideal of education for the student of divinity, and the ideal is worth stating fairly fully, both for the light it gives on Weemse himself, and because the subject is again under review at the present time.

In the title page of the *Christian Synagogue*, we noted, Weemse set down the intention of the book as "to serve generally for a helpe to the understanding of all that desire to know and obey the will of God in holy writt; But more especially for all young students of Divinitie, that they may more easily understand the languages of Canaan, and Greece, and make a profitable use of them in Preaching." That is, the minister's training is to be based on a thorough knowledge of the Bible, and his exposition of the Bible is to go out from a thorough grounding in language and philology, and a good knowledge of Biblical Introduction.

That is not to say that in his educational ideal Weemse has no place for the humanities or the sciences. Far from it. "There are," he writes in the 'loving advertisement to yong Students in Divinity' prefixed to the *Exercitations Divine*, "there are three Schooles in which young Divines must be exercised: the Schoole of Arts and Sciences, the Schoole of Grace, and the Schoole of your Vocation." And, "It is a great helpe and an introduction to Divinitie, to be trained in the first Schoole of Arts and Sciences: Moses was learned in all the wisdome of the Ægyptians, Daniel in the learning of the Chaldeans, and Dionysius Areopagita was trained up in Philosophie." "To take away all human learning from a Divine were in effect to make him no Divine. The



knowledge of all Arts and Sciences is necessarie for him," and he goes on to mention as examples Geometry, Arithmetic, Geography and Physics. That he had himself acquaintance with these subjects is shown in the *Observations Naturall and Morall* where he treats of topics like The Four Elements (1): Whether the winds have any weight or not (28): Whether a woman giveth seed in generation as well as a man (54): Whether the sight or the hearing be the better sense (78).

But for the preacher, Weemse holds, any apparatus of knowledge, however varied, loses its power unless its possessor has too the knowledge of the original tongues of the Bible, because they are the *Vehicula Scientiarum* (*Exer. Div.*, Ep. to Young Student). "To read the Scriptures (sc. without the original tongues)—I quote from the *Christian Synagogue*—is nothing but a standing at the door and never entering within the house, you either cannot or will not. Those that cannot are to be excused, but those that will not, let them hear what God saith in the Prophecy of Hosea: Because thou hast despised knowledge, I will also despise thee, that thou shalt no more be a priest unto me. Study the Holy Scriptures in their own proper languages, the Hebrew and the Greek, so that they may not speak to you by an interpreter, and that the proverb in the Talmud may not be applied to you: *Benzoma semper foris est*, this man is never at home."

Words like these are surely interesting when one remembers the state of Hebrew scholarship in Scotland at the time. Wm. Row calls his grandfather, the Reformer, "the man that first brought the knowledge of Hebrew letters to Scotland." (*Hist.*, p. 466.) That was in 1558. Wm. Row's father taught Principal Rollock Hebrew when he went as a student to Edinburgh in 1586. "In 1619 at King's College, Aberdeen, it was found that practically no Hebrew was being taught" (Henderson, *op. cit.*, p. 18), and it was not—as far as I know—till Principal Row took it in hand in 1643 that a Hebrew Grammar or Dictionary was published in Scotland. Therefore Weemse seems to have been one of the pioneers, and it may well be his influence which gave the study the impetus it had in the following generation. Where he himself derived his incentive it would be interesting to know. May it have been the influence of his two fellow-shiremen, Row and Andrew Melville?

Weemse's demand of the "earnest student of Divinity" in Hebrew—he demands it too in Greek, but he is much more interested in Hebrew—is, first of all, a thorough and extensive knowledge of philology and language. So in the *Christian Synagogue* and the *Exercitationes Divine* he deals with subjects like the Hebrew alphabet, giving some history of the evolution and change of form of the letters: the pointing, quoting the *Zohar*, that "he who readeth without points is as he who rideth without a

bridle," and trying to assign a date to the introduction of the points: he deals with the accents, with details of the Massoretic tradition, the marginal reading, the division into Haphtaroth and Parashoth, the purity of the text, and so on, down to details which none but the *most* "earnest" student would consider as coming within the scope of the ordinary college course, such as, *quid valet apud Hebræos Caph gemminatum* (*The Four Sons*, p. 279), or why four books of the Old Testament have the letters פפן printed at the end of them.

But, Weemse goes on, the student's education in the language of Canaan should not "stop at mere grammar, so as to stand upon Letters, Accents, Pronunciation, and the like." (*Exer. Div.*, Ep. to Read.) From τεχνική he must go on to ἐξηγητική, "the true meaning of words, to interpret them out of one language into another, and to understand one phrase by another" (*ib.*). So Weemse goes on to give etymologies, and to comparative philology in general (he holds Hebrew to be the original tongue, and makes an attempt to show that all other tongues are derived from it). He deals also with the different methods of collating Scripture with Scripture, with the origin and history of the Versions, and with ways of using them and criteria of their value. Above all he lays emphasis on the importance for the understanding of the Scriptures in general and special texts in particular of a knowledge of the "writings of the Jews" such as Midrash, Mishna, Talmud and Targum. These the student ought to know, for in them is a wealth of information for interpretation.

But ἐξηγητική does not exhaust Weemse's demand of the student. He has to go on further to κριτική. But before looking at that, two notes which he gives on the contemporary history of the Versions are worth noting. (a) Arguing against the view that the Samaritan was the original copy of the Old Testament, he says, if it had been, "then it should follow that the Church hath wanted the true originall Text until the yeare of God 1626, when Petrus de Valle brought it from Damascus" (*Exer. Div.*, p. 112). (b) Writing about the Syriac version, he says that "the translation which was heretofore in our Churches was defective, and wanted many things which were in the originall, as it wanted the last verse of the seventh Chapter of John, and the history of the adulterous woman, Joh. 8 (and other passages which he mentions). But that Copy which is brought lately from Syria wanteth none of these, as Ludovicus de Deiu testifieth in his Syriacke translation which he hath now published, and the Arabicke translation which Erpenius had by him, hath all these places which the former translation wanted" (*ib.*, p. 148).

To come back, from ἐξηγητική the student must proceed to κριτική; which is "discerning the true reading from the false, as the Massoretcs did, who excelled in this." And even ability in κριτική needs something

for its crown, the gift of the Holy Ghost. For, he says in the *Ceremoniall Law*, "knowledge without sanctification is like wine that runs in a man's head and makes him giddy" (p. 188). And he makes the complaint which, I suppose, every generation of Church people have made of the generation that is coming after them: "the Church is much to be pittied now, although there be many youthes to succeed, who have knowledge, yet there is little sanctification amongst them, and therefore lesse hope that their ministry shall be profitable" (*ib.* 185).

Before passing on, let us look at Weemse's exegesis of one passage, for it illustrates his teaching in practice.

The verse is 1 Kings 2. 14, "And he tooke the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters, and sayd, Where is the Lord God of Elijah Aphhu.

The exegesis is:—The question is, whether this word Aphhu should be joyned to the words going before, or to the words following? Some joyne it to the words following, and read it this way, he himselfe smote the waters, that is, Elijah himself. But the words should be joyned with the words going before, Where is the Lord God of Elijah Aphhu. For they are distinguished from the words following by the point Pesik, and Aph-hu are joyned together by the Euphonicke accent Maccaph, which sheweth them to be but one word; the words are to be read as a prayer, Elisha calling upon the God of Elijah by his title and attribute Aph-hu.

Now that this is one of God's attributes is proved first, because the Seventy never doe translate it.

Secondly, because Aquila and Symmachus translate it here *κρύφιος*, which signifieth the hid name of God, and Hu is oftentimes joyned to the proper name of God Jehova, Lamen. 1. 18. So to the name Peli, hu peli, Dan. 8. So to the Messias, Zach. 9. 9.

Thirdly, the Chaldee paraphrast doth not translate it, but paraphraseth it thus; Suscipe petitionem meam Domine Deus Elijah Aph-hu.

Fourthly, the Jewes at this day at the beginning of their prayers, they begin their invocations thus, Aph-hu, qui es ante orbem conditum, accept of my petition, O Lord God of Elijah Aph-hu. Aph-hu that was before the world was made, and Aph-hu a quo conditus est orbis, Aph-hu by whom the world was made.

Lastly, the ancient Jew Abrabaniel, commenting upon this place, putteth Jehova for Aph-hu; by these reasons we may perceive, that all those take it for a proper name of God."

(*Morall Law*, i, p. 162.)



Quite the most interesting part of Weemse's ideal of education and of his books is the place he gives in them to the importance for the understanding of the Bible of the writings of the Jews themselves, such as the Midrash, the Mishna and the Talmud. His books, especially the *Christian Synagogue* and the *Exercitations Divine*, are a perfect treasure-house of information, illustration, interpretation and commentary drawn from them. It is not possible to give examples here, but whether it is Old Testament customs or festivals; whether it is passages from the New Testament which require a knowledge of their Jewish background for the full appreciation of them, such as Jesus' saying in St. John 8, "I am the light of the world"; whether it is the exact meaning of a law or a precept; or whether it is a topic he is expounding: time and again he draws from these writings mentioned and from the Rabbis, until in the end the man who has read him through comes to feel he has gained not only a great deal of background to the Bible, but as well a comprehensive insight into what we call Judaism. Indeed it is not going too far to say that if anyone wishes to know what such writings as the Midrash, the Mishna and the Talmud are like, and to learn how and where and when they were composed, he could do worse than take Weemse as his guide.

As far as one can see, Weemse claims to be at least *one* of the pioneers of this kind of knowledge in Scotland, if not *the* pioneer. *Venia danda*, he says on the title-page of the *Exercitations*, *primum aliquid experienti*, and in the Epistle Dedicatory of the 2nd book of the *Morall Laws* he says, "though many have written already on the Commandments, yet there is something left to be cleared, and my intention especially is to clear these things out of the original tongues and the customs of the people of God."

The list of authorities he draws from is wide. Amongst grammarians and lexicographers he depends upon the Buxtorfs, mentioning expressly their *Christian-Talmudic-Rabbinic Lexicon*, and the writings *Tiberias* and *Synagoga Judaica*, while he also refers to Munster's *Lexicon Chaldaicum*, Scaliger's *Opus novum de emendatione temporum* (1583) and Avenarius' (Habermann) *Grammatica Ebraea* (1562). Among the ancients are Apocryphal writers such as Ben Sira and Tobit, many of the Rabbis, and Josephus. Among mediaeval Jews there are Maimonides; Benjamin of Tudela; Moses Cotzensis, whose *Sefer Mitzwoth Haggadol* dealt with the prohibitions and commandments of the Mosaic Law as expounded by the Rabbis and the Talmud; the Kimchis; Leo Hebraeus, a philosopher and poet who died in Venice in 1535; Moses Gerundensis, a Spanish Talmudist of the 13th century; Elias Levita (1469-1549), a student of the Massora who was an energetic teacher of Christians; Jacob b. Chajim,

who arranged the Massoretic notes in the Venice Bible of 1524-25 ; the Zohar ; and many others, making it quite apparent that his learning is drawn from many sources. Of non-Jewish authorities he quotes, amongst others, from Rivetus, *Isagogue ad Script. sac. V et N.T.*, 1616 ; and from Publius Cunaeus, *de republica Judaica*, and Grotius, who, according to the *Jewish Encyclopaedia*, were the first Christian scholars who accepted, in their Biblical interpretation, the explanations of the Rabbis ; while of English Hebraists or Old Testament writers he mentions Brerwood, Fuller and Rainolds (Reynolds). The one Scottish authority whom he mentions, " Master Robert Gordon, our countryman," I have not been able to trace. If John Weemse is Scotland's first student of Jewish life and learning Biblical, post-Biblical and mediaeval, she has every reason to be proud of him.

Ecclesiastic and scholar, minister and teacher, Presbyterian and Episcopalian, John Weemse in his 56 years did much, read much, and wrote much. He deserves to be better known than he is.